



This document provides answers to commonly asked questions about site plan review regarding trees and related ordinances. These are in place because the City of Rochester Hills has determined that trees provide significant benefit to our community, including but not limited to:

1. *Public health: through the absorption of pollutants, reduction of damage related to noise pollution, and cooling effects;*
2. *Public Safety: through the prevention of erosion, siltation, and flooding; and*
3. *General welfare: by providing play / recreational areas, natural beauty, and an irreplaceable heritage for city residents.*

Tree Conservation

What is a Regulated Tree?

- Any tree DBH (Diameter at Breast Height) of 6" or more, regardless of perceived quality or species.
- There are some exceptions, which include dead, diseased, or damaged trees. These are trees that are otherwise expected to die within 2 years if left standing. [For all exceptions, see Sec. 126-266](#)
- *The Parks and Natural Resources Department has designated all Ash trees as an exception (they are assumed to be dead or dying due to the emerald ash borer) as well as Elm trees that show signs of infection from Dutch elm disease as verified by a city Arborist.*
- Regulated trees in the city with a 24" DBH or greater, and all trees that meet a specific size criteria as listed in a table provided within the ordinance are considered "Specimen Trees". [See Sec. 126-397 \(3\)](#)

Where is this Applicable?

- Throughout the entire city and for all types of developments (i.e. residential, commercial, etc.)

What are Preservation Requirements?

- Any regulated tree that is removed must be replaced or else payment must be made into the city tree fund. Tree replacement calculations shall be shown on proposed site plans. [See Subdivision III of Tree Removal Division.](#)
- "Specimen Trees" require more replacement (50% DBH) if removed or provide a tree credit (one 2" tree) if preserved. [See Sec. 126-397 \(3\)](#)
- A minimum of 40% of regulated trees must be preserved for all types of developments.
- Trees within the building envelope are assumed to be removed and therefore are not included within the 40% preservation requirement. However, these trees still must be replaced or paid for. [See Sec. 126-327](#)
- All remaining regulated trees shall be protected from damage with protective fencing during construction and there shall be no construction or development activity within their dripline. [See Sec. 126-428](#)

Right-of-Way Trees

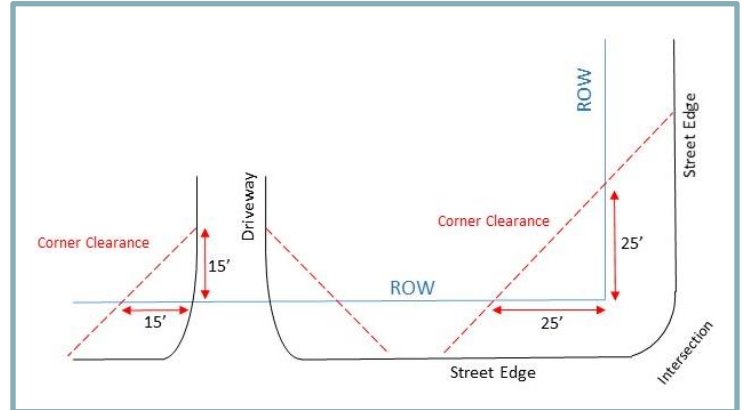
What is required for Removing or Planting Trees in the Right-of-Way (R.O.W.)?

- Planting or removing trees within the public R.O.W., regardless of size, are subject to other requirements and regulations and will require a separate permit.
- The city shall plant street trees in the R.O.W. after construction of the project is complete. The applicant shall pay \$200 per lot to account for this planting.
- A separate permit may be required by the road agency owning the public road (e.g. MDOT) and utilities may need to be contacted where they may have a vested R.O.W. interest (e.g. Consumers Energy).

Continue on the back

What are the Corner Clearance Requirements?

- A 25’ corner clearance must be maintained at the intersections of two road right-of-way (ROW) lines and a 15’ corner clearance is required for any driveway or walkway that intersects a ROW. [See Sec. 138-5.204 of Zoning Ordinance](#) Along major roads, additional sight line requirements may come into effect.
- Shrubs no higher than 30” may be planted within the corner clearances. Only existing trees with their first branch at a minimum of eight feet may remain within the corner clearance.



What Species Can I Plant and Where?

- A list of prohibited species and species not recommended to be planted for street trees can be found here: <https://www.rochesterhills.org/index.aspx?NID=584>
- A list of recommended species for Street Trees that can also act as a guide for replacement trees can be found here: <http://rochesterhills.org/index.aspx?NID=359>

Street Tree Spacing and Distance Requirements

From Fixed objects	Deciduous Shade	Evergreen	Ornamental	Shrub
Hydrants	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.
Public streetlights	25 ft.	25 ft.	10 ft.	-----
Sidewalks/pathways	5 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.	5 ft.
Driveways	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.
Public utility poles/overhead wires	25 ft.	25 ft.	15 ft.	-----
Underground public utility lines	5 ft.	5 ft.	5 ft.	5 ft.
Adjacent lot	5 ft.	5 ft.	5 ft.	5 ft.

[General ordinance; chapter 106; Division 2 - Trees on Public Property](#)

The following statement is required to be included on all landscape plans before approval will be given:

“Prior approval is required to plant any tree or shrub on the public right-of-way. All trees and shrubs must be planted at least 10’ from the edge of public road. (Trees must be planted at least 15’ away from curb or road edge where the speed limit is more than 35 mph). Shade trees and shrubs must be planted at least 5’ from the edge of the public walkway. Evergreen and ornamental trees must be planted at least 10’ from the edge of the public walkway. No tree or shrub may be planted within the triangular area formed at the intersection of any street right-of-way lines at a distance along each line of 25’ from their point of intersection. No trees or shrubs may be planted in the triangular area formed at the intersection of any driveway with a public walkway at a distance along each line of 15’ from their midpoint of intersection. All trees and shrubs must be planted at least 10’ from any fire hydrant. Shade and evergreen trees must be at least 15’ away from the nearest overhead wire. Trees must be planted a minimum 5’ from an underground utility, unless the city requires a greater distance. These requirements are incorporated in this plan.”

It is important to remember that these are just highlights from the city’s ordinance that address commonly asked questions and for a complete and comprehensive explanation of requirements and guidelines, please refer to the city ordinances at https://library.municode.com/mi/rochester_hills/codes/code_of_ordinances.